

{As Prepared For Delivery}

**Vermont Press Conference and Project Announcements
October 26, 2005**

**Thomas C. Dorr
Under Secretary for Rural Development
Opening Remarks**

[Introduced by Jolinda LaClair]

Thank you, Jolinda. Good Afternoon. It is a pleasure here today. We had a great Farm Bill Forum this morning -- I hope perhaps some of you were there -- and an opportunity to discuss some of the issues in the next Farm Bill, which will be written in 2007.

But now it's time to shift back from the future to the here and now.

USDA Rural Development is, in essence, an investment bank.

Since President Bush took office, we've invested over \$54 billion in rural infrastructure, affordable housing, community facilities, and business development. We've created or saved over 1 million jobs.

Here in Vermont under Jolinda's leadership, Rural Development has invested over \$290 million -- almost \$51 million this year alone (2005).

But the numbers don't tell the story. People tell the story. Yesterday Jolinda and I were at a similar event next door in New Hampshire, where we introduced three of our partners.

The point I made yesterday -- I raise it because I want to make the same point again today -- was that the projects we are recognizing demonstrate two things:

- **The incredible diversity of opportunity in rural America today,**
- **And the essential role of vision and leadership – entrepreneurial spirit – in bringing those opportunities to life.**

Ultimately, at USDA Rural Development we play a supporting role. The most important person in this room isn't me, and it isn't even Jolinda -- although you could be forgiven for thinking that, as busy as she is.

The most important people in this room are our partners, because without them, nothing happens.

That's why I'm very pleased to introduce some folks who are putting themselves on the line to build businesses, jobs, and a better future for rural Vermont -- our partners:

- **Andy Kehler, of AP GAR**
- **Dick, Rich, and Mandy Hulet, from Deer Flats Farm**
- **Tom Rainey, with the Vermont Center for Emerging Technologies.**

It is worth noting that all three of these ventures deal with renewable energy. As one looks across rural America today, energy is the new cash crop. From ethanol and biodiesel to methane gas recovery to wind and solar power, renewables are coming into their own.

The potential is unlimited, and at USDA Rural Development, we are excited about the opportunity to support entrepreneurs like Andy ...

Dick, Rich, and Mandy ... and Tom ... who are building the future one farm, one project, one community at a time. Thank you.